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## REVIEWS AND NOTICES.

## A STATISTICAL STUDY OF ILLEGITIMACY.

*Illegitimacy, and the Influence of Seasons upon Conduct. Two studies in Demography.* By Albert Leffingwell, M.D. With maps and diagrams. London and New York, 1892. Pp. viii, 160.

One of these studies forms "the first treatise in the English language upon the subject of Illegitimacy," while the other deals with the influence of seasons upon suicides, insanity, murder, crimes against chastity, crimes against the person, birth rates, marriage and divorce, and revolutions and insurrections.

There are many loose notions prevalent in regard to illegitimacy, but very little accurate knowledge; accordingly, the author has attempted to gather within a convenient space authentic statistics on the subject, particularly in connection with the British Isles, but also with some reference to other parts of Europe as well. For the United States the sources of information are meagre.

The first striking fact is the remarkably uniform number of illegitimate births from year to year. During the eleven years 1879-89 the largest number in England was 43,155, the smallest 40,627; in Scotland the extremes were 10,727 and 9,643; in Ireland 3,367 and 3,049. In the same length of time, of 1000 children born, in Ireland from 25 to 28 were illegitimate, 46 to 49 in England, 79 to 85 in Scotland. The same uniformity is seen when we examine the statistics of any individual county for a series of years, some counties having a uniformly large percentage, others an equally low one. To select a few illustrations: of the four northern counties of England, Westmoreland and Cumberland average 70 and 76 illegitimate births per 1000, Durham and Northumberland 41 and 54; again, Norfolk 74, its neighbor, Suffolk, 57. In Scotland the northern counties average 77 per 1000, the northeastern 141, the northwestern 64, the east midland 89, the west midland 65, the southeastern 78, the southwestern 68, and the southern 139. In Ireland, Munster furnishes an average of 17 per 1000, Leinster 22, Connaught 7, and Ulster 40.

Such variations in the different subdivisions of the members of the United Kingdom, and, secondly, the persistence of the same, or nearly the same, average rate in those separate parts, give rise to a number of questions; for counties which showed high rates thirty and fifty years ago show, as a rule, high rates today, and those with a low average then have generally a low average now. What, then, is the influence of poverty? of country and town life? of education? of religion? of legislation and restraints to marriage? of heredity?

It does not appear upon investigation that poverty, city life, and ignorance are so responsible for illegitimate births as one is apt to presuppose. In Ireland the poverty-stricken county Mayo shows 5.6 illegitimate births out of every 1000, the prosperous county Down 51.1. This fact, in varying proportions, is seen over and over again in all countries; not, however, that poverty and chastity always go together, but the presence of the one is not so marked by the absence of the other that any relation of cause and effect between the two can be established. The same is true of town and country life; London, Birmingham, and Liverpool are considerably more virtuous, so far as the proportion of illegitimate births is an index, than are North Wales, Westmoreland, Cumberland, and Shropshire. The prevalence or absence of ignorance, too, is no sure guide, as can be seen from comparing the various countries of Europe, and also from a comparison of smaller districts.

Religion, legislation, and heredity, on the other hand, seem to be the most potent factors in determining the percentage of fatherless children. Religious influences certainly affect conduct, but no peculiar virtue can apparently be asserted for any particular creed. Rigid Calvinism does not prevent the Scottish maiden from going astray; Lutheranism is not a sure protection to the Norwegian and Swede; and though the Roman Catholics of Ireland are comparatively chaste, their sisters of Bavaria do not reach the same standard. But in Bavaria, Austria, and some other countries another consideration is involved,—legal hinderances to marriage. Finally, there is the question of hereditary influences and local sentiment as tending to perpetuate an evil once established in a community. It must, moreover, always be borne in mind that the presence or absence of a high rate of illegitimacy cannot be assigned to any one or two causes exclusively, but that many considerations working together have to be taken into account. Furthermore, concealment is ever possible to a

larger or smaller extent, and even the most careful enumerations cannot be entirely without error. Also, the proportion of illegitimate births is not of itself alone a sure indication of the standard of sexual morality prevailing in a neighborhood or state.

The second study of this volume — on the influence of seasons upon conduct — need be merely referred to. The results may be summed up in a few words: the warm months are the most conducive to attempts at suicide, to attacks of insanity, and to the commission of crimes; the cold months are the least so. Dr. Leffingwell enters into a careful examination of the subject, and brings to his aid data gathered from various countries on the different phases of the topic; he concludes “that either by the gradual increase of solar light and solar heat, or else in some other manner quite mysterious at present, the breaking up of winter and the advent of spring and summer seasons, produces upon all animated nature a peculiar state of excitement or exaltation of the nervous system.”

CHARLES F. A. CURRIER.

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## MORTGAGE INDEBTEDNESS IN EUROPE.

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The real-estate mortgage indebtedness and the subdivision of land holdings in eight European nations are the subjects of *Reports from Her Majesty's Representatives Abroad on the Position of Peasant Proprietors*, presented to Parliament in February, 1891. These reports are much more satisfactory, statistically, than the reports from the consuls of the United States, in regard to mortgages in foreign countries, published in November and December, 1889.

Some information in regard to real-estate mortgage indebtedness has been gathered in Austria-Hungary, Prussia, the Netherlands, and Sweden; but Her Majesty's representatives have not presented the statistics of mortgages that they obtained in these countries so clearly nor with such explanation as is required to make their meaning and trustworthiness clear. No attempt seems to have been made anywhere to go back of the mortgage records, and it must be supposed that the face of the records considerably exaggerates the true amount of indebtedness. That this is so in Sweden and in Switzerland is expressly stated in the reports.